



## LITERARY LANDSCAPE

### Nomination due April 1 for Montana Poet Laureate

The Montana Poet Laureate is a position created by the Montana Legislature, which recognizes and honors a citizen poet of exceptional talent and accomplishment. Applications for the state's next Poet Laureate are due in the Montana Arts Council office by 5 p.m. Friday, April 1.

In 2005, Sandra Alcosser became the first Montana Poet Laureate and served for two years. Greg Pape was selected as the second Poet Laureate in 2007, followed by Henry Real Bird in 2009, and Sheryl Noethe, who will serve until the summer of 2013.

The Montana Arts Council encourages nominations of poets from all walks of life,

and all poetry forms are welcome. Montanans may nominate a poet for the Poet Laureate position, or learn more about eligibility requirements, the application process and the Poet Laureate program at: [art.mt.gov/resources/resources\\_plposition.asp](http://art.mt.gov/resources/resources_plposition.asp).

The term of service for the position is two years and the award is honorific. The Montana Arts Council will convene a panel of poets and literary experts, among others, to select three finalists from among the nominations. These names will be submitted to the Montana Arts Council for approval and finalization. The Poet Laureate of Montana will then be chosen by the Governor from among these

nominees in the summer of 2013.

The Poet Laureate will be chosen on the basis of three criteria:

- Excellence as evidenced by the submitted poetry samples;
- Exemplary professionalism as evidenced by an established history of substantial and significant publication and special honors, awards, fellowships or other recognition; and
- Advancement of poetry in Montana communities.

For further information, please call or email Kim Baraby Hurtle: 406-444-6639, [khurtle@mt.gov](mailto:khurtle@mt.gov).

### KwKwsum Theater Project gaining ground

Sometimes a project instantly receives a name. Sometimes it takes awhile to simmer. So it has gone with the KwKwsum Theater Project in Arlee. It has taken on many shapes and forms before becoming the multi-dimensional project it is today. And its potential for getting bigger and better grows with each performance.

What started out with local playwright Victor Charlo telling his own "coyote story" to the people of the Salish-Kootenai Tribes in the early '90s grew larger with a vision by Bearhead Swaney to perform original Indian plays at the Arlee Powwow Grounds.

This dream of theatrical sharing has been gaining momentum ever since with theatre festivals held each summer on the Flathead Reservation.

The project's title, KwKwsum, means "star" in Salish. The title emerged during a conversation between committee members Zan Agzigian and Julie Cajune, who conceptualized it as a "guiding light," or "beacon" that would draw American Indian writing talent to the Flathead theater.

During the past decade, project members have cultivated support for original and brave American Indian works written, stage-read, directed and acted by a variety of talented individuals, from young adults to teachers, artists to poets, and even foreign students, as they are sometimes asked, impromptu, to come on stage and read.

The KwKwsum Project is now the theater arm of larger artistic efforts overseen by the Arlee Community Development Corporation through Npustin, a nonprofit that offers artistic opportunities to rural tribal communities; it is run by Cajune, an educator and playwright.

Cajune debuted her own work, "Belief," in the KwKwsum summer festival in 2012. Of it, she says: "I am interested in presenting a meaningful and authentic voice and image of American Indian people, and especially of American Indian women."

"I couldn't think of a more meaningful way of doing it than through theater," she adds.

Cajune and Jennifer Finley co-wrote this one-woman performance, which was directed by Linda Grinde and accompanied by three musicians performing an original score during its premiere in December 2012. Despite coinciding with the first snowstorm of the season, the Bigfork Performing Arts Center filled with eager theatergoers interested in hearing Cajune's unique perspective. With additional secured funding, the creators of "Belief" hope to tour it internationally in 2014.

Finley, another playwright and committee member, articulates the KwKwsum mission as this: "To bring important, vibrant, and meaningful tribal stories into the forefront of the American consciousness. Our stories are informed by the past, but we are living people with living stories that are continually being created."

"Our unique stories need to be part of a larger dialog not only for tribal people, for everyone. There is an urgent need and hunger



Playwright Vic Charlo helps Karl Stein and Anna Baldwin rehearse their lines during a KwKwsum Theater Project festival in Arlee.

for more tribal stories to be told from an authentic source."

Finley's own play, "Hellgate Treaty," was staged at last summer's festival to a diverse audience.

Each year, in the much-anticipated summer festivals, original works are read by a combination of seasoned and novice actors and directed by Grinde. In the past two summers, the project offered a week of evening events in which the submitted plays were rehearsed and read in front of a packed audience.

These annual summer events are gaining momentum in the region and the 2013 summer festival promises to be even larger.

The committee is currently seeking funding to bring Bill Yellow Robe, famed American Indian playwright, on board by 2014 as half-time artistic director. No stranger to the project's vision, in 2003 Yellow Robe held popular writing workshops in Arlee.

The KwKwsum Theater Project has received sporadic funding over the years to offer a youth summer theater camp. Recent staged-reading festivals were sponsored by local nonprofits, business owners and caring individuals interested in the arts as a way to establish a more sustainable funding channel for continued formulation of various aspects of the project.

The committee wishes to see year-around theater-based programs for schools. They hope to offer workshops in various theater components such as directing, costumes, stage building and storytelling in both Arlee and at Salish Kootenai College in Pablo. With these strategic partnerships, the project expects to cull the best of contemporary American Indian scripts and ultimately to create a haven for upcoming and established Indian theater artists.

To learn more, write to KwKwsum Theater Project, c/o Arlee CDC, PO Box 452, Arlee, MT 59821. If you are an American Indian in Montana interested in sharpening your playwriting and performance skills, or have written plays you wish to see performed, contact project CFO Donna Mollica, at [donna@hanginartgallery.com](mailto:donna@hanginartgallery.com) to have your work reviewed.

#### KwKwsum Mission

The KwKwsum Theater Project's Mission is to be an extraordinary haven of encouragement where American Indian people interested in theater can hone their skills, gain feedback, and find real, authentic, creative ways to express their talents in a supportive, open-minded environment.

The Strategic Committee is comprised of Donna Mollica, Julie Cajune, Linda Grinde, Jennifer Finley, Zan Agzigian, Patty Stevens and Victor Charlo.

### MONTANA POET LAUREATE

#### Usual Style by Sheryl Noethe

In the usual style the old gang  
Shows up to foment revolution.  
We shout and argue about the plan,  
create code numbers, dual identities,  
passwords, the complex secret handshake.  
Our mission statement spray-painted on the walls.  
Suddenly an armored truck pulls up,  
Crashes through our wooden barriers.  
Someone yells my name, they shout, "He's after you!"  
I run to the window where armed soldiers  
Release an enraged Frankenstein.  
Howling, bolts in his head smoking red-hot.  
He's bigger than ever, you hear him all the way across the city.

Wait, I think, how the heck  
did he get into this dream?  
He's not supposed to be here.  
He belongs in childhood.  
Someone has confused the agenda.  
The revolution is on hold.



Photo by Kurt Wilson

#### Pam Houston guest editor for latest *Whitefish Review*

*Whitefish Review* is accepting art, literature and photography submissions for its 13th issue – The Lucky Issue – that will be published on June 7, guest edited by author Pam Houston.

"We are lucky to have Pam on board for this issue and look forward to seeing what we discover about luck," said Brian Schott, founding editor of the journal. "I have a feeling some great surprises await us."

"I think about luck a lot, because I have had more than my share of it," says Houston, whose most recent book is *Contents May Have Shifted*, published in 2012 by W.W. Norton. "I am interested in the borderlines where luck and its close cousins – fate, faith, chance and magic – intersect."

Submissions are accepted via an online submission manager at [www.WhitefishReview.org](http://www.WhitefishReview.org) through March 15. For full guidelines, please visit the website.

A new book review section has recently been added to the website, edited by Todd and Sara Ream. Editors are also beginning to select their favorite pieces from the first six years of the journal to create an archive of previously published pieces available online for the first time.